

Mandatory Review

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

ROUTINE

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CITE

DIST 22 MAY 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 21 MAY 1968

SUBJECT MEETING OF HUONG AND KY ON 21 MAY

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (22 MAY 1968) FIELD NO.

SOURCE

1. PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE TRAN VAN HUONG CALLED ON VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY ON 21 MAY FOR WHAT HE SAID WAS NOT A COURTESY CALL BUT RATHER "A SEARCH FOR A CONFIDANT" AFTER MANY LONELY WEEKS OF TRYING TO DECIDE ON HIS POLITICAL ROLE IN THE COUNTRY. HUONG NOTED HE HAD REJECTED MANY REQUESTS FROM PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU TO SERVE AS PRIME MINISTER BUT THAT THIEU HAD FINALLY INSISTED, AT

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WHICH POINT HE HAD FELT OBLIGATED TO ACCEPT. HUONG SAID HE WAS ALL TOO CONSCIOUS OF ALLEGATIONS THAT HE IS A SUDISTE, A SEPARATIST AND A POTENTIAL COMPROMISER WITH THE VIET CONG (VC). ALL THESE ACCUSATIONS HE SAID, ARE SIMPLY NOT TRUE. HE SAID HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE WIDELY-HELD ASSUMPTION THAT KY IS OPPOSED TO HIM, WHICH HE DOES REALLY BELIEVE IS TRUE.

2. KY RESPONDED BY ASSURING HUONG OF HIS CERTAINTY THAT HUONG IS NOT A SEPARATIST AND WOULD NOT COMPROMISE WITH THE VC. HE SAID HE IS NOT AGAINST HUONG, BUT HE DID EXPRESS SOME CONCERN ABOUT THE YOUNGER, AGGRESSIVE AND SOMETIMES UNSTABLE SET AROUND HUONG WHO COULD "SPOIL IT FOR THE ADULTS." KY MENTIONED VO LUONG TRIEU AND NGUYEN WAN TRUONG BY NAME. HUONG SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE BENT OF SUCH PERSONS AROUND HIM AND DEPRECATED THE AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE THEY WOULD HAVE ON HIS POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT.

3. KY ENCOURAGED HUONG TO GO AHEAD WITH FORMING HIS GOVERNMENT AND NOT BE OVERLY DISTURBED BY RUMORS AND GOSSIP. HE PROMISED THAT AS LONG AS HUONG SERVED THE COUNTRY AND DID NOT COMPROMISE WITH THE VC HE (KY) WOULD BE WITH HUONG. HUONG SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH HE HAD EXPECTED TO BE REASSURED BY KY, HE FOUND KY'S REMARKS VERY SATISFYING. HE THEN TOLD KY THAT IF HE EVER TOOK ANY ACTION THAT KY THOUGHT WAS A

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BETRAYAL OF THE COUNTRY, KY SHOULD TELL HIM AND HUONG WOULD RESIGN AT ONCE.

4. THE REST OF THE CONVERSATION WAS ON AN EVEN MORE PERSONAL BASIS, WITH HUONG REFERRING TO THEIR COMMON PERSONALITY TRAITS AND INTERESTS. HUONG ALSO RECALLED AN INCIDENT AT KY'S WEDDING WHEN HUONG GRASPED KY' HAND IN THE CARAVELLE HOTEL AND PREDICTED THAT HE WOULD SOMEDAY ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. HE MENTIONED THEIR COMMON LIKING FOR DOING "SHOWY" THINGS WHEN OUT AMONG THE PEOPLE AND FOR WRITING POETRY.

IN THE PAST, KY HAS HIMSELF REMARKED ON THE FACT THAT HE AND HUONG ARE ALIKE. KY REACTED POSITIVELY TO WHAT WAS A SOMEWHAT SENTIMENTAL AND OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO PLAY ON HIS FEELINGS AND FLATTER HIS EGO. KY IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO THIS APPROACH UP TO A POINT. ALTHOUGH HIS REACTION WAS POSITIVE ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, KY REMAINS RESENTFUL OF THIEU'S HANDLING OF THE CHANGE OF CABINET AND SOMEWHAT MISTRUSTFUL OF THE "HUONG SOLUTION". NEVERTHELESS KY APPARENTLY DOES NOT INTEND TO WITHDRAW TO THE SIDELINES AND HAS STATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO BECOME ACTIVE WITH THE ABOUT-TO-BE-CONSTITUTED COUNCILS PROVIDED FOR IN THE CONSTITUTION AND TO CONTINUE HIS DIRECTION OF THE SELF-DEFENSE CORPS.)

5. (FIELD COMMENT: ACCORDING TO ANOTHER SOURCE, HUONG HAS OFFERED TO NAME LIEUTENANT COLONEL PHAM VAN MINH, NOW A KY AIDE, AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND TO RETAIN LUU VAN TINH, REPUTEDLY A STRONG KY SUPPORTER, IN HIS PRESENT POST AS MINISTER OF FINANCE.

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THIS SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT KY REMARKED TO A CLOSE ASSOCIATE AFTER THE MEETING THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED BY HUONG'S EVIDENT SINCERITY IN SEEKING HIS COLLABORATION.)

6. FIELD DISSEM: STATE USMACV 7TH AIR FORCE DIR/JUSPAO
(MR. NICKEL ONLY) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF

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